

RELIGIOUS UNITY AND TOLERATION.

By F. RAMIÈRE.

[As our readers are well aware, there are some Catholics who, in opposition to the teaching of the Holy See, regard the modern "liberties"—not as calamities necessitated by deplorable circumstances and involving grievous social degradation—but as actual blessings, and as constituting a true advancement in the path of political progress. That admirable writer, M. Le Play, who in many ways has done such signal service, has shown himself nevertheless somewhat infected with this error; though (as F. Ramière points out) it has now much less hold on him than it once had. F. Ramière is perhaps at this moment the most powerful and successful of the Catholic combatants against "Liberal Catholicism"; and having been engaged in a short series of articles on "the conditions of social regeneration," his subject has naturally brought him into contact with M. Le Play. The following paper appeared in the "Études" of last April; and we feel we shall do good service by translating it. Some parts will remind our readers of the article in our present number on "The United States"; and others of that on "The Rights of Conscience." But its general scope is sufficiently distinct from the argument pursued in either of those articles.]

OUR readers will have doubtless understood, that over and above the peculiar theory which is its immediate object, the present discussion relates to one of the most vast and difficult problems now discussed in modern society; a problem which liberalism has professed to solve by the liberty of conscience and of worships. But by avoiding these revolutionary formulæ, M. Le Play has divested the system which they express of that which is most opposed to orthodoxy and sound reason. Between liberty of worships and toleration there is the difference, which separates an absolute principle from an expedient suggested by prudence; an acknowledged right from a free concession. The assertion of the liberty of worships supposes a negation of all revealed doctrine, and even of all religious truth: toleration, on the contrary, restricted to just limits, may be united with a very firm faith; and the Church has sanctioned it even at Rome, by her invariable treatment of the Jews. But if this derogation from the principle of religious unity may be justified under certain special circumstances, it may not be raised into a general principle. For in that case, the exception, ceasing to be an exception, would, so far from confirming the rule, destroy it. This is just what some excellent Catholics will not see. Dazzled by certain accidental advantages of toleration, they make it a general principle; and they thus ally themselves with liberalism in denying the essential rights of truth.

Our preceding article seems to us useful for disabusing this class of

adversaries; who, in combating religious unity, believe that they are serving the interests of religion and society. We showed them that the liberty of error is equally destructive to both these orders of interests; that by permitting irreligion to excite against the divine laws all the irregular instincts of the human heart, it gives it full scope to shake to the foundation the essential basis of social order. Unless they deny that influence necessarily exercised by the intellect over the will, which is one of the fundamental laws of human nature, they cannot doubt that diversity of creeds would inevitably produce opposition of tendencies, and thus tend to the disruption of society.

We should have the right to confine ourselves to these arguments, founded on the nature of things, and confirmed by the concessions of those political writers who are least open to suspicion. But though they suffice to convince men accustomed to reflect, they will, nevertheless, be probably powerless to convince those men, so numerous in our day, who seek truth by means of observation rather than of reasoning. In truth we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact, that at first blush experience seems here to contradict theory. In proportion as principles are decisive in favour of doctrinal unity, facts, on the contrary, seem favourable to toleration. And this appearance must have had much resemblance to reality, when it could have obtained the adhesion of so impartial and enlightened an observer as M. Le Play. But so far from finding in this circumstance a reason for rejecting the method adopted by the author of "*La Réforme Sociale*," we shall see that a more careful use of this method gradually diminished the divergence which existed between his too hasty conclusions and the orthodox doctrine. No one has certainly made a better defence for religious liberty on the ground of experimental evidence, than did M. Le Play in the first editions of his great work. When then we find, in the subsequent editions and in other books written under his inspiration, a reply to those arguments,—nothing seems wanting for a refutation of that system, which we had previously shown to be false on the ground of principle.

I.

We have already cited the arguments with which the history of the three last centuries furnished M. Le Play, for showing that the régime of liberty is preferable to the régime of what he calls "constraint." The study of the present state of society in its diverse aspects confirmed him in this view. His sojourn in countries ruled on opposite principles had enabled him to testify that "the salutary emulation, with which the different clergies are inspired by the vicinity of several communions, gives to the various branches of Christianity an energy worthy of the great centuries in which the Church struggled against paganism. This is different, especially in wealthy States, where one of these communions, being made a State religion, is defended by the political power against the rivalry of other communions. This rivalry does not of course add to the intrinsic truth of the principles in question; but it singularly elevates the character of those who profess them. And it is only through the co-operation of men that

moral law and divine grace act on humanity." * To this passage M. Le Play adds the following note, in his edition of 1872 :—

"A French cleric of the so-called ultramontane school absolutely rejects these conclusions, in a general criticism from which I have derived much instruction. He denies that the contact of dissentients would usefully react on the learning and virtue of a Catholic clergy ; so that this contact, condemnable on the ground of principle, would not have in fact the result which I suggested. To this assertion I oppose the following facts, which I shall prove by evidence. The corruption of the Catholic clergy is conspicuously apparent in wealthy countries where other worships are forbidden ; whereas there does not exist any example of these scandals in those countries where dissent is tolerated or (still better) dominant."

Although ourselves belonging to the so-called ultramontane school, we do not see any difficulty in admitting the facts, which seem to have so strangely embarrassed the cleric in question. M. Le Play seems to us to have perfectly portrayed the nature of the advantages which would result for the true Church from her juxtaposition with heretical sects, when he compared them with the advantages produced by persecution. In fact, the attacks of speculative error are as dangerous a persecution against the truth as are those of the sword. The sophisms, the calumnies, the sarcasms, which are used by such enemies as Luther, Calvin, and Voltaire, certainly do as much harm as the sword and stake of the Neros and Diocletians. These two methods of attack have the same object and the same result ; viz., to oppress liberty of conscience, by rousing the passions against it. To attain this object, tyrants have depended on man's dread of torment, and sophists on the allurements of licentiousness. These are intrinsically the two weak sides of human nature ; by which she is diverted from the way of duty, if she does not react energetically against herself.

What will happen then if this internal weakness be aggravated by external influences ? Whether it be persecution which excites fear, or sophistry which stimulates concupiscence,—the same result will be infallibly produced : souls too weak to resist will succumb, but souls strong enough to resist will gain most happy fruit from the contest. The soldier when in presence of the enemy is more vigilant, and more on the alert. Knowing that the least omission of duty on his part may be fatal, he has his arms continually in his hand, and yields no step to the aggressor. Every new attack which he successfully repels increases his courage, together with his merit ; and he gains glory from the war, in proportion to the number of his own party who are lying victims around him. We acknowledge then most readily, that the liberty granted to opposing religions may offer to the Catholic Church some of those advantages, which made the eras of persecution so glorious to her. But could we thence conclude that this régime is preferable ? To arrive at such a conclusion, one must forget the nature of the Church. Suppose that she ceased to be the mother of souls and of all souls, nothing would then prevent her from sacrificing to the interest of her glory the salvation of all those, whom the persecution of the sword or the seductions of error have led to apostatize. But as God has confided

* "*La Réforme Sociale*," liv. i. ch. xii. p. 163.

these to her care, He does not permit her to consider the attacks to which they have yielded as anything but deplorable misfortunes.

Let us attentively examine the exaggerated praises which some Catholics give to the liberal régime; we shall then see that these praises imply a forgetfulness of the mission confided by Jesus Christ to His Church. They see in her only an army; whereas in truth she is also a family. If she were simply an army, she might congratulate herself on the trials, which expel from her ranks all her bad soldiers, and leave only the valiant around her flag. The sacerdotal ministry is in happier condition in countries, where one can only remain a Catholic by being seriously attached to one's religion, and ready to support real sacrifices for its sake. This is the condition to which the persecution inflicted by liberalism, and the application in other countries of the measures attempted in Switzerland, will soon bring her. The Church will undoubtedly thence derive great profit, as regards her interior discipline and her external power of action. Delivered from cowards and traitors, from bad priests and bad Christians, she will proceed with greater confidence to the struggle, and will fight with more energy. The Church then has no fear for herself, either from the attacks of error or from violent persecution; the Divine promises assure her of that victory in the first of these issues, which she had already achieved in the second. She trembles only for that mass of weak souls who cannot resist social influences, and for society, which condemns itself to death by depriving itself of the vital element of truth.

Indeed the free attacks of error tend by their nature to produce a more fatal result to society, than does a bloody persecution: they tend to produce indifference. After a shorter or longer period of severe struggles between the partisans of opposite creeds, minds become fatigued; men become gradually accustomed to see the opposing parties living side by side, enjoying equal rights; kindly intercourse between men of opposing creeds softens the edge of these contradictory beliefs; and, at length, religious truth is considered as but an accessory element of human perfection. In the eyes of many people, this state of things is the perfection of society; in reality it is its ruin. What is it, indeed, but practical scepticism, the necessary precursor of speculative scepticism, if not its result? This toleration, then, could not be considered an element of social perfection by men, who have learned from M. Le Play that scepticism is the most certain symptom and the most active principle of decay. The illustrious writer opens the first book of his "*Réforme Sociale*" with this remarkable statement:—"The methodical study of European society has taught me, that individual happiness and public prosperity exist in proportion to the purity and energy of religious convictions." This sentence expresses the fundamental thought, of which the whole book is but the development and demonstration. The author then will coincide with us in considering the juxtaposition of contrary creeds as a social danger, if it be proved to him that such juxtaposition must inevitably alloy the purity and energy of religious convictions. Now this is the conclusion, which (as we shall presently see) results from the facts alleged by M. Le Play, and which seems indeed

self-evident. For the energy of belief is necessarily proportioned to the repulsion inspired by contrary creeds. Now this repulsion cannot fail to become ever gradually weaker in the majority of men who are incapable of sifting things to the bottom,—when they see error exteriorly established on the same footing as truth, enjoying equal rights and receiving from public opinion the same homage. This régime, by destroying the energy of convictions, tends by its very nature to shake the essential foundations of social order.

II.

We must now apply these general considerations to individual cases, and examine the experience of the past and present as to the social results of toleration.

Firstly, is it true that the evidence of history demonstrates the superiority of this régime over that of religious unity? By no means. It does not follow that the moral splendour of the reign of Louis XIII., after the proclamation of the Edict of Nantes, was the *fruit* of that measure; any more than the simple succession of time is sufficient to prove, that the scandals of the Regency were the fruit of the revocation of the same edict by Louis XIV. To establish the connection of cause and effect between two successive epochs, one of two things is required: either to show directly in the events themselves the trace of this connection or indirectly to prove that the second had the same cause as the first. Now it is impossible to apply to the present case either of these demonstrations. That regeneration of the morals of the clergy, that magnificent efflorescence of sanctity, which was developed in France at the beginning of the 17th century, and which extended its fruitful influence to every class in the nation, and to every branch of social activity, is the direct and manifest effect of a well-known cause: viz., the true Christian Reformation which took place in the Catholic Church, while Luther and Calvin, under the pretext of Reform, gave reins to all the licentiousness of intellect and senses. An analogous and equally remarkable movement had already taken place in Italy and Spain, where, however, no edict similar to that of Nantes had been promulgated. S. Francis de Sales, S. Vincent de Paul, S. Jane Frances de Chantal, and the other holy personages mentioned by M. Le Play, were produced by the same influences which had produced virtues equally admirable in other countries. We should never finish, if we attempted to enumerate all the heroic acts of charity and zeal, which Spain offered to the admiration of the world during this period. For it is very remarkable, that at the very time that France was cast into an abyss of evils by religious divisions, the energetic reaction of Spain against the novel heresies raised Spain to a degree of splendour and prosperity which she had never before attained. How conciliate these results with the theory, that social well-being is derived from toleration? How could the same régime, which raised Spain to so high a pitch under Charles V., be the cause of her decay under the successors of Philip II.?

Portugal, without changing its régime, also went through this double phase; and none will venture to say that she was less indebted for her

greatness to the zeal of John III. than for her humiliation to the intolerance of his heirs. The conclusions adduced against religious unity from the history of France are not better founded. M. Le Play has elsewhere* taught us, that the reign of S. Louis was the most brilliant and prosperous period of our national existence. Now, who does not know that that great prince, full of self-denial as regarded his personal interests, was utterly intolerant as regarded attacks against Christianity, and violations of the laws of God? It was certainly not from having imitated him too faithfully on this point, that the last of the Valois surrendered France to the twofold scourge of religious dissension and civil discord. Was it not on the contrary the weakness and duplicity of their policy, which bequeathed to France the crimes and horrors justly deplored by M. Le Play, from which the Christian policy of St. Louis would have delivered her? We do not certainly pretend to justify the excesses of the League; but we do not understand how we are to be as severe against it as M. Le Play is, when we, like him, praise the splendours that accompanied the religious restoration in France. Would this restoration have been possible, if Protestantism had been triumphant, and if the League had not prevented it from consummating the ruin of France? Would Henry IV. have been a Catholic without the League? and if he had not been converted, would not the rich development of Catholic France under Louis XIII. have been stifled?

What was this marvellous burst? It was the natural result of the liberty and security assured at last to the Catholic Faith after a period of sanguinary struggles. This result would have been absolutely the same, if the Edict of Nantes had not been promulgated. We do not, in truth, see by what right one can credit the reign of toleration inaugurated by that act with the virtues of S. Francis de Sales,† who,—born long before the promulgation of the Edict,—lived in a country subject to the opposite régime, and not only approved of such régime, but sued for its more vigorous application. Neither logic nor history warrant our asserting, that the moral and intellectual corruption of the eighteenth century proceeded from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.‡ Whatever one

* "L'Organisation du Travail," ch. i. s. 14.

† It was not only by his birth and education, but also by his convictions and his practice, that the gentle S. Francis de Sales was utterly alien to the system of the State's practical indifference on matters of religion. Of this we have an irrefutable proof, in the Memorial published by the Holy Bishop to the Duke of Savoy, for the maintenance of the Catholic Faith in the Chablais (*Opuscules*, p. 108, quoted by M. Hamon, i. p. 507). It will be seen that, after having employed methods of persuasion for reclaiming the heretics, S. Francis de Sales did not think the intervention of the civil power, in order to prevent their falling back into heresy, either illegitimate or useless.

‡ The Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685. In 1688 Fénelon noted a falling off from the practice of Christian virtue, as having proceeded during the previous forty years. At the same time La Bruyere wrote his chapter on "Les Esprits Forts"; and Bossuet, in his "Oraison Funèbre d'Anne de Gonzague," and in his sermon, "Sur la divinité de la religion," thundered in his loudest tone against the advance of unbelief; nay, glancing beyond the eighteenth century, he foresaw

may think of that act—which was certainly rather political than religious—one cannot attribute to it the slightest influence over minds, to whom the errors of Calvinism were as indifferent as the Truth itself. M. Le Play himself accounts for the disorders of this period by alleging other far more powerful causes, whose effect would have been equally fatal at that time, even had the Protestants continued to enjoy their full liberty.

III.

But let us leave past events; and, in order to be convinced of the dangers resulting from even the pacific struggle of religious doctrines, let us confine ourselves to the present. Let us fix our attention on peoples whose prosperity has been brought forward as an evident proof of the excellence of the régime under which they live. "Public opinion," says M. Le Play, "is unanimous in acknowledging that Russia, England, and the United States are the nations in which prosperity has most rapidly increased during the last two centuries, notwithstanding the diversity of their constitution and other social data. This superiority is at once shown by the social harmony and the stability of these States; it is made clear to the least observant minds, by the rapid enlargement of the territories occupied by these races or subject to their rule."*

modern indifference; the fatal termination in which, after a sanguinary struggle, error would issue. The Abbé Maynard, who relates these incidents in his "*Histoire de S. Vincent de Paul*," p. 376, very justly attributes to Jansenism the deplorable change which religion underwent in France at the beginning and end of the eighteenth century. The scandalous lives of the royal family certainly contributed to this decay; but while violating law, these scandals still left the authority intact which was commissioned to establish its observation. Jansenism overthrew this authority; and deprived it of the power which it had used under so many circumstances, to repair the gravest infractions of the Moral Law. M. Le Play then is misinformed when he names the Jansenist cabal, in common with S. Vincent de Paul, as the promoters of the religious restoration of the seventeenth century. Their talents and their virtues called on them to take a considerable share in this noble work; but their contempt of authority made them dangerous revolutionists.

While the Jansenists, depending on the aid of the Parliament, discredited the authority of the Church, the infidels attacked her doctrine by sophisms and ridicule, and her morality by their licentious writings. It was not then the excessive vigour of authority, but its criminal weakness during the whole course of this unfortunate epoch, which gave strength to impiety. Far from furnishing arguments in favour of toleration, the history of the eighteenth century plainly witnesses against it; and compels us to attribute to it, in great part, the disasters of the Revolution, and consequently, the religious, moral, and political decay of France.

As to the immediate effects of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to judge of it in a rational manner, we should read what the Duc de Noailles says in his "*Histoire de Madame de Maintenon*," and what is said by Bossuet, Fénelon, and other celebrated bishops of this century, either in their own history or in Michaud's "*Biographie Universelle*." See, for example, the notices on Joly, Bishop of Agen; Le Camus, of Grenoble; Flechier, of Nîmes; Fromentières, of Aire.

* "*Réforme Sociale*," liv. i. ch. ix. § 6, p. 154.

We admit the fact : but far from finding in it any proof of the advantages ascribed to toleration,—by the irrefutable evidence of M. Le Play, we will prove the precisely contrary thesis. Clearly we cannot attribute the prosperity of *Russia* to her toleration ; since, notwithstanding the liberalism which lately induced her to abolish serfdom, she maintains her ancient laws of proscription against dissentient worships. M. Le Play even leads us to see in this intolerance the great guarantee for that stability and harmony which he admires in Muscovite society : for on one hand he affirms, that “her firmness of religious belief is, by the concession of all those who have carefully studied this country, the chief source of her success for so many ages” ; and on the other hand he says, that “the Russian religion would with great difficulty resist the contact of dissentient worships, and especially the assaults of scepticism.” She is then obliged, if she is not to lose that influence whose happy effects have just been pointed out, “to appeal to the secular arm, and to impose on her citizens by formal ordinances the practice of the official religion.” This is certainly, in every sense of the word, a régime of “constraint” : whatever may be the cause of the stability and prosperity which Russia enjoys, these advantages cannot be attributed to religious liberty.

We know what the partisans of this régime will reply. They admit that societies still in their infancy cannot be submitted to it without danger ; but they say that adult societies naturally find in the very conflict which it causes an occasion for displaying their noblest energies. Such is the situation of England and of the United States ; and it is in these countries that M. Le Play calls on us to admire the salutary results of the juxtaposition of several rival worships. “The English,” he says, “although acknowledging in religion the foundation of their nationality, rate at a high value the resources which are assured to the people by the knowledge of scientific truth, and the free discussion of principles. They understand that the strength of a society does not depend solely on the energy of its beliefs, since inferior nationalities are placed, under this head, in the first rank. They especially measure this strength by the proportion of liberty which its beliefs can support without being enervated. The inspiration of faith, united with the continuous exercise of reason, habituates the mind to make a distinction between what may and what may not be usefully discussed. The citizen, who has no doubts respecting the commandments of God and the social duties emanating from them, naturally conciliates the desire of amelioration with the respect due to tradition. He is able to use all the strength of his mind to shake off the yoke of routine, in all that refers to secondary interests and to the ordinary wants of society.”*

The influence of religious liberty is no less beneficial, according to M. Le Play, in the United States, to the development of social energy and the progress of religion itself. “One has at first some little trouble in discovering the principle of authority in a society apparently so little governed ; but it is soon perceived that the universally accepted sovereignty is that of Chris-

* “*Réforme Sociale*,” liv. i. ch. xi. § 7, p. 155.

tianity. Religion supplements the action of repressive law, and of the secular arm, because the citizens are obliged by their conscience to conquer their evil inclinations. Each head of a family, finding his chief guarantees of security in the religious character of his neighbours, requires that these shall, in every case, show their respect for religion. Each citizen then voluntarily fulfils those duties, which are imposed on the Russian by his sovereign supported by his soldiery. Never do they think, in the United States, of bringing religion into their political struggles, much less of claiming in its name the help of the civil power. The ministers of religion habitually use a means of success which has no limits: they stimulate by their preaching and example the religious zeal of their flocks. It is thus that the Catholics, weakened and sometimes degraded by the protection of government in the old Spanish and Portuguese colonies of America, attain in a few years in the United States to a great position, as is proved by the remarkable testimony of many. As for myself, it is through the conversation and writings of the Catholics of North America that I cherish the hope of seeing speedily accomplished, under the influence of religion, the social reform of the Latin populations of the South-west of Europe.”*

The reader who, in the first editions of the work of M. Le Play, met with such significant pronouncements in favour of religious liberty, might have experienced serious difficulty in reconciling the results adduced by that sagacious observer, with the laws of human nature, and with the indications furnished by experience in our own country. How does it happen that liberty of discussion, which has been productive among us of scepticism and immorality, has in England and America strengthened religious belief and the empire of morality? There is doubtless a remarkable difference in the character of the Latin and Anglo-Saxon races, which would partly explain the different influences exercised by the same régime on each. Less excitable than the Latin-Celt, the Anglo-Saxon is more calculating, and practical considerations influence him more than abstract doctrines. While the former is easily impassioned for an idea, and deduces from it, even to his own detriment, the most extreme consequences,—the latter, more cool, stops voluntarily half-way, in the path of error as well as in that of truth, when he finds it too inconvenient and embarrassing to carry it out to its legitimate result. But if this peculiar disposition of the two great Anglo-Saxon nations has retarded in them the disintegrating action of free examination, it has not completely sheltered them from the dangers which we have seen to inevitably emanate from the conflict of contradictory doctrines. Sooner or later, the absence of all dogmatic authority must cause, even in these nations also, a frightful intellectual and moral anarchy, instead of that semblance of harmony which different accidental causes maintained for some time after the destruction of the principle of unity. Is not this in fact what has happened? A century and a half had not elapsed since the Reformation, before Bossuet proved that it had not left intact in England a single stone of the

* “*Réforme Sociale*,” liv. i. ch. xii. § 3, pp. 163-164.

doctrinal edifice built by the Son of God. "All that religion deemed most holy has been destroyed. England has so changed, that she does not herself know to what she shall cling; and more agitated within her lands and within her harbours than is the very ocean by which she is surrounded, she finds herself inundated by the formidable deluge of a thousand extravagant sects."*

When Bossuet pronounced these words, the movement of doctrinal decay stamped on England by Protestantism had not attained its ultimate limits: it was to go on for another century; and finish by destroying, in the mind of a people naturally so religious, the very basis of natural religion. Did not the inaugurators of French philosophy borrow their most corrupting sophisms and their most dangerous attacks on Christianity from Bolingbroke and other English writers of the eighteenth century? A remarkable reaction took place at the end of the last and beginning of the present century; but what was the cause of it? Was it not, on the one hand, the feelings of horror inspired in all by the frightful consequences which the revolutionary logic deduced from the principles of impiety? On the other hand, was it not owing to the happy influence produced in England by the virtues of our clergy, to whom she had given a generous hospitality? It was then that she relaxed, in her own bosom, the fetters which had weighed down the Catholics; and we can come to no conclusion in favour of the liberty claimed for error, from the happy fruits which resulted from liberty at length being conceded to Catholic truth.

But the deleterious action of free inquiry, momentarily arrested by this reaction, is again manifesting itself with greater violence than ever; and obliges M. Le Play, in the later editions of his work, to retract a great portion of the praises he had bestowed on English toleration. He thus expresses himself in a note added to the last edition:—

"The facts mentioned in this chapter were collected during my frequent visits to England since 1836. They were noted on the spot, in 1851, in accordance with the text which I have reproduced. In 1862, when I last visited England, the condition of things was tending to a change, and since then recent intelligence has informed me that the evil has been aggravated. Certain literary celebrities have adopted the ideas which the savans of Germany, rather than those of France, are propagating in the cities and manufacturing towns of the West. They desire to destroy that work of reparation, which was accomplished in England under George III., and which, since our misfortunes, has inspired in France great devotion in the sphere of our agriculture, our arms, and our fleet."†

The evidence on which this note rests is only too undeniable; and it considerably weakens the testimony given in the text to the religious prosperity of England. It is no longer true to say that in that country "a writer who desires the esteem of his fellow-citizens" "dares not deny that Christianity is the principle of her prosperity and her liberty"; that "those who venture to spread the paradoxes accepted among ourselves would be spontaneously excluded from every respectable society." Those

* Bossuet, "*Oraison funèbre de la Reine d'Angleterre.*"

† "*Réforme Sociale,*" liv. i. ch. xii. p. 156, note *g.*

who have read our preceding numbers can convince themselves, that the most pernicious of these paradoxes have been supported in public gatherings; and the slight degree of repulsion which they have encountered shows that Christianity is far from having that influence over the mind of the nation which was supposed. The venerable University of Oxford, so long the bulwark of Anglican orthodoxy, has not been able to shield herself from the invasion of German rationalism; and, once established in that citadel, nothing can prevent its undermining the faith of the clergy and of the educated classes. There is every reason to believe that the evil, which is externally manifested by such frightful symptoms has long since been imperceptibly gnawing the entrails of English society. The posthumous autobiography of Stuart Mill reveals to us, in this leader of the school, the art reduced to system of concealing an absolute scepticism under a respectable exterior. Let us acknowledge that the practice of this art is not so difficult in Protestant society. The heretical sects not imposing on their members, as the Catholic Church does, any acts which imply an energetic profession of faith,—incredulity makes serious ravages among them without any exterior display. But if we may judge from the tone of their more popular journals, there is a double movement in English society; while the minority are influenced by the Ritualistic reaction,—the spirit of Christianity and the idea of the supernatural are weakened, and are tending to disappear completely, from among the masses of the nation.

As much may be said of the United States. And here also the candour of M. Le Play obliges him to admit the truth of what we say. "One recognizes," he says, "by a number of symptoms, that a change is taking place in the ideas and morals of this great nation." What is this change? It is the very change which we pointed out as the necessary result of free discussion.

"Daily do we see new sects appear in the United States, who are only nominally attached to the Christian dogma. Some of them even abandon themselves to the practice of illuminism and polygamy. It seems also that scepticism and materialism are openly professed in some of the large cities. American travellers assure me that in New York, for example, religious belief is corrupted in proportion to the propagation of those deplorable morals which have made some European cities true nurseries of contagion. These tendencies, *which no positive institution represses*, are being rapidly developed. The habitual symptoms of decay are everywhere showing themselves: luxury disorganizes the domestic hearth, family ties are relaxed, and under this influence women take upon themselves habits of independence, and so give scandal to Europeans. The civilized world, which, since the time of Washington, had received only a good example from the Americans, is now surprised to see them follow a retrograde path."*

These words were written in 1874, the date of the latest edition of the "Réforme Sociale." Even at that time the results of religious liberty in the United States were regarded in a less favourable light by M. Le Play

* "Réforme Sociale," liv. i. ch. xiii. p. 166.

than they had been. But the judicious observer must not stop here ; and, in a short time, the application of M. Le Play's own method proceeded to display new light, and finally dissipate every illusion. One of the most distinguished members of the "Union de la Paix Sociale," M. Claudio Jannet, has just published a work, by which we may appreciate at its just value that American democracy, for which M. de Tocqueville had inspired us with such an unreasoning admiration.* M. Jannet does not grudge his admiration and praises of the excellent institutions which, united to exceptionally favourable material conditions, gained for the United States their unexampled prosperity and their immense development. But side by side with these elements of progress, whose action was especially shown during the first half of this century, we see, during the last thirty-five years, a movement of moral and even material decay, continually increasing. To trace these two contrary influences to their true principles, M. Jannet has patiently analyzed them. The result of this conscientious inquiry has been formulated by M. Le Play himself, in a letter printed at the beginning of the book. He says :—

"In portraying in a faithful picture the moral decay of the United States, you have led us back to one of the causes of our own ruin. You point out to us the error which caused our delusion, respecting the origin of that prosperity, which we so much admire in this nation under the descendants of Washington."

This is, in fact, the conclusion clearly resulting from M. Jannet's book : that what has been alleged as the origin of the greatness of the United States is, on the contrary, the cause of their decay. It is generally supposed that this society is founded on liberty of worships and democratic equality. Nothing is more false. Every state of which the Union was composed at the beginning had a religious basis, and several of them made the enjoyment of political rights dependent on ecclesiastical position. All had a state religion except one, which from the first unfurled the standard of toleration : and this exception was the only Catholic State, that of Maryland. Hence it resulted, that by means of this toleration, the Puritans of New England established themselves in large numbers in the country, seized the reins of government in 1648, and excluded the Catholics. If, to obtain the aid of France in the struggle against England, they relaxed the rigour with which they had treated the true religion, they did not on that account proclaim dogmatic indifference. Each state preserved its religious autonomy, as well as its political sovereignty ; and it was to save the former, that they decided to leave religion outside of the federal constitution. At the same time Christianity was recognized as the law of the entire nation. In all the States blasphemy and the violation of the Sunday rest were severely punished ; and nowhere would the negation of Christ's divinity have been tolerated. Every great act of public life began with prayer, and Government was never backward in decreeing religious services, either of expiation or thanksgiving, to ward

* "Les Etats-Unis contemporains," by Claudio Jannet.

off menacing perils, or to celebrate national successes. As long as the mass of the nation was imbued with this religious spirit, the disintegrating influence of the democratic principle could be neutralized. But after 1830, when the founders of the Union were all in the grave, respect for the old traditions was impaired, and free inquiry soon bore its natural fruit. The clash of different creeds, the ever-increasing licentiousness of the press, the immigration en masse of German colonists infected with scepticism, completely demolished the edifice of American Protestantism ; and while Catholicity was acquiring fresh vigour from attacks, which deprived it however of a large number of its weaker members, the Puritanism of New England, but lately ardent to fanaticism, rapidly divested itself of every positive creed, and gave way to the vague Deism of the Unitarians. It was the same in the other States ; and three-fourths of the Protestants now no longer acknowledge Jesus Christ as their God. They are still Christian by name, but in reality they have no creed ; and those who are stung by the desire to believe something, if they do not enter the Catholic Church, throw themselves into the absurdities of Mormonism or the superstitious practices of Spiritism. This new religion, the diabolical counterfeit of the Divine supernatural, boasts of having three millions of followers. Altogether there is no limit to the religious disintegration of the United States. Every day the principle of private inspiration produces some new sect, which offers a more gross allurements to the passions under a more mendacious appellation : there are the partisans of *free love*, whose name sufficiently indicates their principal dogma ; *perfectionists*, who have perfected marriage by substituting for it a brutal promiscuity.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that with this religious disorganization there necessarily corresponds an ever-increasing social decomposition. The *mob*, whom universal suffrage invests with the sovereignty, who are not guided in the exercise of this sovereignty by any principle of religion or morality, only make it an object of speculation and a protection for license. As all officers, even the magistrates, are elected, the most capable are not chosen, but those who are best able to flatter the passions of the electors. According to this principle that "the spoils are for the victors," the party who succeeds to power at each new election makes a clean sweep of the officers appointed by the preceding government. The electional agents dispose of the offices in advance, receiving a premium for themselves. The malversations of each functionary, in endeavouring to pay this tax and also to make his fortune during his very brief tenure of office, may be easily understood. Impunity is secured to him, since he can only be punished by his own party, who are quite as greedy as himself. So the peculations which are practised under the eyes and with the knowledge of all, in all branches of the public service, surpass everything that we could believe possible in Europe. In the Custom-house alone the State loses every year, according to official reports, from 60 to 125 millions of dollars. The duty on whisky, which should amount to 400 millions, was returned, in 1867 as only 65 millions. The offices in the Senate are publicly sold ; and the most lucrative profession in the United States is not that of the stockbroker, but of the broker of offices.

Can we then be astonished that, recruited in this manner, the magistracy is venal, and that the greatest criminal is almost sure to escape prosecution if he has sufficient money to corrupt his judges? What guarantee, then, is there for justice against crime, and for public interests against individual covetousness? What can honest men do, under such a régime, except keep themselves aloof from public life, and confine themselves as much as possible within their own families? Outside of that circle, there is only shameless license and indescribable tyranny. No Christian king, during the period of absolute monarchies, would have dared to permit to himself the acts of oppression and the denial of justice, of which the unfortunate planters of the South were the victims at the end of the war of secession, on the part of President Grant and his employes. And even now we see a new enlargement begin to open, upon this already intolerable tyranny. It had, until now, generally respected religious liberty, and the poor Indians had been the sole victims of the masonic fanaticism of Mr. Grant. But very recently he has thrown off his last mask of liberalism, of which he was the worthy representative in America; and denying with unparalleled impudence the traditions which had been the glory of his country, he has published a programme of politics very similar to that of the great Prussian liberal, Prince Bismarck.

IV.

Experience is, then, decisive. The logic of facts is perfectly in accordance with that of ideas. The liberty of error, more complete in America than even in England, has there developed on even a larger scale the consequences which we had seen contained in its principles:—absolute unbelief, unbridled licentiousness, the hatred of truth and of Christian morality. There is but one step from thence to a bloody persecution: and in the interval, until the threats already uttered are realized, the one object, which Freemasonry proposes in preaching toleration, is carried out by yet more efficacious means. The triumph of the sect being certain in both hemispheres, nothing can prevent its placing its last hand on its work, which is the radical destruction of Christianity and of all the religious bases of society. This they reckon that they can certainly do, by removing religion from the schools. Washington, when dying, said: "Never permit education to be separated from religion." This was because he understood that,—as education forms men and consequently society,—an atheistical education, by corrupting at its source the morality of individuals, annihilates the most essential element of social life. The connection is rigorous: no society without morality; no morality without religion; no religion without religious education. Well! we see in those countries in which M. Le Play loved to show us that Christianity was so respected and so fruitful, that a party already powerful, and becoming daily more so, openly labours to destroy all religion at its very basis. Let us acknowledge the fact: this party only pushes liberal doctrines to their extreme consequences; and applies to one of the social institutions—viz. education—that indifference as regards religious truth, which is the logical basis of toleration raised to the dignity

of a principle. But, on the other hand, let us understand that, if this party succeeds, social reform is at an end. When the Revolution shall have succeeded in exterminating from the souls of the rising generation all respect for the divine law,—those practices, which constitute the prosperity of nations, and which M. Le Play has judiciously analyzed, will have no more power to resist it, than a straw to oppose a hurricane which uproots the oak. This, then, is the great enemy of social reform, against which all who desire the success of that work must unite. The revolutionary plot has become too evident to be overlooked. Attributing to others his own straightforwardness, M. Le Play refuses to admit the existence of this great anti-Christian conspiracy; and he does not desire that we should, with Joseph de Maistre and Balmez, find in it the explanation of those religious and political revolutions which have accumulated so many ruins in Europe. Rather he sees, in the corruption of the Catholic clergy, whether at the time of the Reformation or in the eighteenth century, the chief cause of that revolt, which at those two epochs detached from the Church a considerable portion of Christian society.

We will oppose this view by one solitary argument; but it is a decisive one. If the Protestant movement had had as its motive, and not merely as its pretext, the corruption more or less great of the Catholic clergy,—it would have produced a certain reformation among those who took part in it; and the movement would have stopped, when the regeneration of which the Council of Trent gave the signal had been consummated in the Church. But we all know that the pretended Lutheran Reformation produced amongst its adherents, and especially among its clerical adherents, a demoralization of which Protestants themselves were ashamed.* Who does not know that the disciplinary measures of the Council of Trent were as violently rejected by the soi-disant reformers as its dogmatic decrees? Finally, who is not aware that, instead of being disgusted by the scandals of the clergy, the philosophers of the eighteenth century openly applauded the said scandals, and preferred to take their auxiliaries from the ranks of those licentious abbés, who were ecclesiastics only in name? We do not, certainly, pretend to deny the relaxed state into which too large a number of clerics and religious had fallen, at those sorrowful epochs. While not forgetting the great exaggeration of certain writers, prompted by their hostility to the Church, we must concede that this evil was great; the Church has never attempted to hide this

* It was not only in Germany and France that the Protestant clergy showed themselves the faithful imitators of the married monk of Wittenberg and the licentious nun of Noyon. The Anglican Church itself, which has ever been the most respected of all Protestant communions and which at first refused to authorize the marriage of the clergy, could not preserve its founders from the ignominious stigma, which should alone have discredited their pretended mission. Cecil, the confidential adviser of Queen Elizabeth, wrote to his friend Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, that the Queen was *utterly disgusted* with the conduct of the new clergy; and that he, Cecil, was seriously compromised, in consequence of the disgrace which they had brought on religion." ("Correspondence," p. 148.)

fact. The language of St. Bernard, which is quoted by M. Le Play, is still ours, when we address those who are called to be the salt of the earth. *As against our accusers*, we have a right to use the same defence as that adopted by Our Lord when censuring the hypocritical severity of the Pharisees. But we know that *in the sight of God* this excuse does not justify us. Thus we do not wait to strike our breasts until we are reminded from without of our obligations.

A popular preacher lately at Rome exhorted the Christians of that city to blame themselves for the calamities from which they were suffering; and taking upon himself and his brethren in the priesthood the largest share of the responsibility, he said to the faithful:—"While in the public confession of your faults you will say, 'Meâ culpâ,' we, the priests, will say, 'Meâ maximâ culpâ.'" On this point, then, we agree with M. Le Play; but after having admitted to the utmost the part played by the irregularities of the clergy in the revolt of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, there still remains the fact, that at those two periods the chief motive of the rebels was their desire to throw off all supernatural authority: first, that of the Church, and then that of God Himself. Toleration was but a mask, to conceal their hatred against the truth, and to procure for themselves the means of becoming intolerant thereof.* Their true object was, not to gain toleration for irreligion, but to annihilate all belief. Created only to attain this object, freemasonry preserved for a long time its secret for the benefit of its principal disciples: but they are now less cautious; and the conspiracy is so manifest, its influence so extended, its means of action so efficacious, and its success so alarming, that any illusion on the subject would be inexcusable.

V.

What then is to be done? What, in the presence of this formidable danger, are the duties of Catholics, and of all interested in social reform? Has the evil no remedy, and do we pronounce the sentence of death on our society? If on the one hand toleration is a social necessity, and if on the other it necessarily adduces the destruction of belief and the rupture of every social tie, how can we escape the ruin with which we are threatened? Is not despair the only practical conclusion at which we can arrive?

God forbid! The ever-increasing ravages of scepticism, and the full liberty with which the great anti-Christian conspiracy is developed, prepare for us new catastrophes. This is what we fear, and what minds the

* In "*Les Doctrines Romaines sur le Libéralisme*," we have quoted from De Maistre the saying of Grimm, who clearly explains the tactics of soi-disant philosophical anti-Christianity: "All great men have been intolerant; and they are obliged to be so. If we encounter by chance an over-zealous prince, we are obliged to preach to him toleration, in order that he may fall into the net, and then the crushed party may have time to rise by his toleration and crush its adversary in its turn. So the sermon of Voltaire, which harps on tolerance, is a sermon for fools, or dupes, or men who care nothing about the matter."

least inclined to pessimism also dread. But we may hope from the Divine goodness that Christian society will not perish in that deluge ; and it is our duty to prepare at once the elements of its future regeneration.

We should especially follow the excellent counsel given us by M. Le Play, and should reform *ourselves*, in order to contribute more efficaciously to social reform. The conversion of the modern world, become pagan, is not a less difficult work, than was the destruction of ancient paganism ; and to surmount its difficulties, we cannot, any more than the first Apostles could, depend on the aid of human governments ; for those have become universally hostile to us. Their protection, indeed, any how would not suffice to save us. If they can do much for the *maintenance* of religious unity, they are powerless in restoring it. We are only armed with the weapons which the Apostles used with so much success ; the principal being charity and the example of an irreproachable life. We do not suppose that the great importance, or we should rather say the indispensable necessity, of the first weapon, can be a subject of doubt. Every Catholic will cordially agree with M. Le Play when he says,—“ To save the last great Catholic nation, we must adopt the maxim of S. Vincent de Paul. We must excel dissentients and sceptics in talent and in virtue.” *

But if S. Vincent de Paul were to return among us, and if he could be invited to draw up rules for social reform, he would certainly not restrict himself to this counsel. He would show us that true virtue can only be maintained among individuals, can only be re-established in society, so far as it is based on a true creed. He would exhort us to imitate his zeal, which never relaxed during his life, in defending the unity of faith. While recommending an affectionate charity towards the victims of error, he would nevertheless urge us never to come to terms with error itself. Such was his line of conduct regarding the most specious of all heresies, Jansenism ; a heresy at that time defended by those celebrated writers—Pascal, Antoine, Arnaud, and a great many others, whose exemplary virtues are lauded by M. Le Play. As soon as he saw these men, remarkable though they were for the austerity of their lives and their great virtues, refuse to submit to the authority of the Pope, S. Vincent de Paul had no further relations with them. He well knew that, by undermining this key of the arch of Christianity, they were labouring, notwithstanding their virtue and even by the aid of their virtue, to overthrow religion and society.†

There is then no doubt that, in the opinion of the Apostles of every age, unity of faith has been the first condition of all effective social reform. If then we wish to continue the work, we must strive as far as we can to give Christians that essential guarantee for its harmony and stability. The experience of wise men unites with the example of the Saints to show us the necessity of this duty ; and if there were anything wanting in the evidence afforded by those considerations which we have already deve-

* “ Réforme Sociale,” liv. i. ch. ix. § 2, p. 110.

† If proofs be required of this most inflexible firmness of doctrine, united with the most indulgent charity, practised by S. Vincent de Paul, as by other saints, they will be found in the Fifth Book of his history by Abbé V. Maynard.

loped, it is from the method of M. Le Play that we should borrow the indication of our line of conduct. Let us apply to the first of all social necessities,—that is, to religion,—the very wise rules with which M. Le Play's method furnishes us, regarding institutions of less importance. What does it prescribe to us, for the peace and well-being of families, workpeople, and civil society? *A return to traditional practices*: for, in the moral order, the spirit of innovation necessarily introduces decay, and true progress can only result from respect to tradition. But how are we to restore these healthy practices so strongly recommended by M. Le Play? Are they to be imposed by violence? By no means; for they would not produce their effect, unless voluntarily accepted. But must we then approve the contrary practices, or at least exhibit indifference to them? If we did so, we should fall into another excess as injurious to reform as the former; for if reform be compromised by violence, it is rendered *impossible* by indifference. M. Le Play appeals then to all who are interested in the well-being of their fellow-citizens; and he implores them to use every means of persuasion to dissipate the prejudices which would be an obstacle to reformation, to combat modern errors, and to prepare, by a new direction given to ideas, a change of morals and institutions in the sense pointed out by the experience of ages.

These rules are dictated by wisdom itself; and we only ask one thing for the assured success of social reform—viz., that they be applied to the relations of man with God, as well as to the relations of a father with his children, and the master with his workmen. During long ages the relation of individuals, families, and societies with the Creator was founded, in Christian Europe, on a basis accepted by all, and the more sacred as it had been erected by the hand of God Himself. The firmness of this foundation gave to the entire social edifice a solidity, which the violence of passion and the barbarism of manners never succeeded in destroying. So, notwithstanding the imperfection of other social institutions, Christian Europe was indebted to this religious régime for a stability and prosperity, which have not been known since the period when the most audacious of innovations substituted the anarchy of opinion for the unity of faith.

What is now to be done? We must evidently return to Tradition; restore what has been so foolishly destroyed; place unity of faith and submission to the authority of the Church at the head of those practices, the restoration of which should constitute the social mould of society.

But how to restore this unity? Must we appeal to violence? God forbid; but in proportion to the folly of such an appeal, so would be that of indifference in regard to the opinions at variance with Catholic Tradition, to which the innovating spirit daily gives birth in the bosom of Protestantism. In vain could we hope to bring back to religion the populations which have been seduced by scepticism, as long as we shall present to them an uncertain and contradictory form of Christianity, of which every constituent dogma is contested by one party or other of its followers. Christians will not be able successfully to cope with infidelity, until they recover their ancient unity, by reuniting those links which a criminal schism had broken in sunder, with the centre of Christian unity. Clear

as it is that social reform is impossible without Christian restoration, it is no less clear that Christian restoration can only be Catholic.

Such are the principles which direct the conduct of those Catholics whom M. Le Play calls Ultramontane, and whose excessive zeal he seems to fear. They only differ from Liberal Catholics, inasmuch as they apply to religious innovations the very same rule, of which M. Le Play so well shows the necessity when applied to other social innovations. While Liberal Catholics are content to resign themselves to the destruction of the Christian order, and do not any longer speak of winning to religion those new societies which have for a century proclaimed their independence,—true Catholics, regarding this pretended emancipation as contrary both to the interests of society and to the traditions of the human race, see in this infatuation for it one more reason for pointing out its dangers. Nothing is more certain than this, that liberalism is as opposed to social Tradition as to Catholic. The separation of the temporal from the spiritual order, which it lays down as its first principle, is the most unheard-of and disastrous of those innovations, by which the modern world has broken with the wisdom of ages, and has condemned itself to a fearful decay. If this be true, we can only regard Catholic Liberalism as an error and a danger, which makes a compromise with this [evil] principle, and divides those forces whose union alone can save society.

By reproofing this illusion we take the only means of re-establishing unity. We do not oppose one party against the other; we are not more ultramontane than *citramontane*; we are Catholics as Catholics are everywhere, and as our fathers were; Catholics, like the Pope, who is more energetic than we in the condemnation of Liberalism; in a word, traditional Catholics. Consequently we ought to be supported by every man who understands and proclaims the indispensable necessity of returning to Tradition.

H. RAMIERE.
